

**OPERATING BUDGET
JOINT COMMITTEE HEARINGS
ENVIRONMENT, LAND ACQUISITION & PLANNING
PARKS, SPORTS & CULTURAL AFFAIRS
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & ENERGY**

Minutes

The joint Operating Budget Committee Hearing of the Environment, Land Acquisition & Planning Committee and the Parks, Sports & Cultural Affairs Committee and the Economic Development & Energy Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York, on **October 28, 2002**.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Legislator David Bishop - Chairman of Environment, Land Acquisition & Planning
Legislator Michael J. Caracciolo - Vice Chairman
Legislator Ginny A. Fields-Chairperson of Parks, Sports & Cultural Affairs
Legislator Jon Cooper - Chairman of Economic Development & Energy
Legislator Cameron Alden
Legislator Angie Carpenter
Legislator Andrew A. Crecca
Legislator Vivian Fisher
Legislator Brian Foley
Legislator George O. Guldi
Legislator Bill Lindsay

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Lisa Keys - Aide to Legislator Caracciolo
Barbara LoMoriello - Aide to Legislator Cooper
Judith Gordon - Commissioner of Parks Department
Denise Speizio - Parks Department
Stephen Raptoulis - Parks Department
Barbara Russo - Parks Department
Brian M. Satteely - Parks Department
Rich Caggiano - Parks Department
Greg Lauri - Parks Department
Joseph Muncey - Budget Review Office
Sean Clancy - Budget Review Office
Kevin Duffy - Budget Review Office
Nicole DeAngelo - County Executive's Office
Jan Moore - County Executive's Office
Carolyn Fahey - Economic Development
Judy McEvoy - Commissioner, Economic Development
Pauline Mize - Economic Development
Beth Levinthal - Executive Director, Heckscher Museum of Art
Lillian Barbash - Executive Director, Islip Arts Council
Diana Cherryholmes - Executive Director, Huntington Arts Council

Kathy Wattecamps - Long Island Museum of American Arts
Allan Varela - Greater Port Jefferson/Northern Brookhaven Arts Council
Muriel Weyl - Greater Port Jefferson/Northern Brookhaven Arts Council
Wallace Broege - Suffolk County Historical Society
Judith Gardner - Cinema Arts Center
Charlotte Sky - Cinema Arts Center
Other interested parties

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Ana Grande - Court Stenographer

(THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 9:15 A.M.)

VICE CHAIRMAN CARACCILOLO:

There are some other Legislators at a budget meeting. Without any further delay, let us start by reciting the pledge of allegiance. They should be here shortly. Rise for the pledge of allegiance.

(SALUTATION)

VICE CHAIRMAN CARACCILOLO:

Okay. The first speaker I have is Alan, and I can't make out the spelling, but I'll try, it's like V-A-S-E-L-A or V-A-R-E-L-A.

MR. VARELA:

It's Varela. Thank you.

VICE CHAIRMAN CARACCILOLO:

Okay. Come on up, Mr. Varela.

MR. VARELA:

Good morning. My name is Alan Varela. I'm the Executive Director of the Greater Port Jefferson - Northern Brookhaven Arts Council and the Long Island Arts and Technology Council. And I wanted to speak a bit today about the arts. I'm sorry. Okay. I'm sorry, I thought you were motioning me not to speak.

LEG. CRECCA:

I was motioning to the Clerk, I apologize. I mean to the Reporter.

MR. VARELA:

Maybe I can just look at it from my experience this summer. My family went up to Cape Cod and we toured many little cities and villages and we stopped in the places that had museums, we stopped in the places that had programs going on, had art exhibits, had antique shows, had a lot of that. The towns that didn't have those things, we kind of just said, well, this is quaint, this is pretty, and then spent our money elsewhere.

And all of the groups that are represented today supply every bit of everything that I saw up in Plymouth and in Port Smith. And it's a very

necessary thing not only for our culture, but for our economy, because I was a tourist, I spent money. The places that had, you know, things to go to and events that were happening, I had lunch there, I had dinner there, I bought souvenirs.

And I just think that it's extremely important to recognize that the arts groups and the museums and all of what, you know, what we call our cultural arts is extremely important for business as well as our culture. And I'd just like to pass this out to everybody if I could.

VICE CHAIRMAN CARACCIOLO:
Does that conclude your presentation?

MR. VARELA:
Yes, sir.

VICE CHAIRMAN CARACCIOLO:
Thank you.

LEG. FISHER:
May I ask him a question, Mr. Chair?

CHAIRMAN CARACCIOLO:
Certainly, Legislator Fisher.

LEG. FISHER:
Hi, Alan.

MR. VARELA:
Hi.

LEG. FISHER:
Alan, I've had the opportunity to visit the -- it's not called the Greater Port Jefferson --

MR. VARELA:
It's Greater Port Jefferson - Northern Brookhaven Arts Council.

LEG. FISHER:
Okay. But the other, the Long Island --

MR. VARELA:
Long Island Arts and Technology. We like big names in Port Jefferson.

LEG. FISHER:
Long Island Arts and Technology, I was very impressed by the fact that Long Island Arts and Technology, although you're on the northern most part of Suffolk County, you're right on the water there in Port Jeff practically, you work very closely with the Babylon Arts Councils and other Arts Councils throughout Suffolk County.

MR. VARELA:

Yes.

LEG. FISHER:

Can you explain a little bit how that works? I think that's really important for the Legislators from other districts to know how other Arts Councils throughout Suffolk County benefit from the work that you do with the Long Island Arts and Technology.

MR. VARELA:

Through several grants, which you can read about in the newspaper, we put together a little technology center with several Macintosh computers, and we had to be dudes, so we got a Dell, I have to say. And we have AutoCAD on the Dell, so Theater Three, for instance, or any theater groups could come up and use that program.

And I supply and other professionals come in free of charge and supply training for things like Photo Shop, an illustrator for graphic design, page layout programs, the high end ones, and seminars on how these things work, web page design. And so Babylon has come several

times to upgrade their web site, for instance. East end sent in a few people to a seminar, how to go from your computer to print and how to make it look good. And hopefully the copy you had had enough ink to make it look good.

So this is a resource that we're making available to all of the arts groups and, you know, artists and cultural groups. Long Island Seaport and Eco Center, Historical Society in Port Jefferson use the computers all the time. So it's a way to either come and try the computers, try the software before you buy it, get a little instruction, you won't get a degree, you want a degree, go to school, but enough instruction to get through your day and upgrade your web site or learn about why that one thing isn't working. And that's what that's about.

LEG. FISHER:

Thank you.

MR. VARELA:

Thank you.

VICE CHAIRMAN CARACCILOLO:

Thank you. Lillian Barbash.

MS. BARBASH:

Good morning. I'm Lillian Barbash. I'm the Executive Director of the Islip Arts Council. It seems to me I've been here many, many times over the last twenty-five, twenty-six years. The faces behind that desk have changed, but I'm happy to say that I'm still here, still in Suffolk County, I plan to remain in Suffolk County.

We're counting on you, the Legislators, to replace what the County Executive has not included in the budget. You've done it in the past. I think the Legislators realize how important the arts are to the economy of Suffolk County.

The Arts Council, the Islip Arts Council presents a major, major event every year. We've just had our 25th annual free New York Philharmonic concert. It's attended by tens of thousands, over forty thousand on some occasions of people from all over the County. As I said, it's free. And it's free, because of the support we get from the County, from the State and from the private sector.

We also present at least three dozen other free events during the course of the year. And again, they're free to everybody in the County. And we hope that the County Executive, the County Executive will be overruled again by the Legislators who understand the value of the arts in Suffolk County to the economy of the County.

I have nothing else to say. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask.

LEG. FISHER:
Thanks for coming down.

VICE CHAIRMAN CARACCIOLO:
Thank you for coming down.

MS. BARBASH:
Thank you.

VICE CHAIRMAN CARACCIOLO:
Muriel Weyl.

MS. WEYL:
Good morning. I've served as a member of the Citizens' Advisory Board for the Arts in Suffolk County for the last three years and have just been reappointed. And I'm also the Vice President of the Greater Port Jefferson Arts Council, Northern Brookhaven Arts Council.

And, of course, I'm here to make the same plea that the other two people have just made, and that is that the arts, of course, need funding and you're the people who support it.

I want to tell you that I was in Iceland a few months ago and a young tour guide took us around and told me how she wouldn't like it in the United States. She was showing us the look, the view of infinity across all of that volcanic rock in which there isn't a tree and it's very barren, in its way beautiful, but she said, you know, in the United States you can't see anything

because the trees, there are so many trees that it blocks the view.

And as I think of that, I think, you know, she isn't accustomed to seeing our treed neighborhoods, she didn't know about the forests, she didn't know about our beautiful mountains. She knew about that particular scene in Iceland. Right?

Well, it's the same with art. If you never heard serious music and you never watched an exhibition of dancers, you know, moving their bodies, and you never really saw a painting and sculptor and everything the arts represent, you may not know what you're missing. But here we have had the advantages of knowing those things and we would feel so deprived if that is taken away from us.

When I came to this community thirty-seven years ago, it was mainly a fishing and a farming community and a lovely hamlet off the path of the track to eastern Long Island. Most of us who came here, came from different parts of the country and each family was really alone in trying to build its future. All right. However, over the years, many people have come here with talent and expertise and countless volunteers have given life to artistic organizations and to the public that they have served.

That public includes major populations, groups, but it includes children and seniors and minorities and the disabled and the disadvantaged, and the availability of programs in the arts has built this community to create a bond among us that integrates diverse groups using the arts as a universal language and it's understood by everybody. So, the harsh truth is that without budgets and without money, these organizations, as you well know, can't survive.

President Bush just nominated Dana Gioia to be the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. And the other day he made a statement, which I think serves us very well. "The arts enliven and enlarge our community, especially in such challenging time. They nourish the spirit of our nation."

Well, Suffolk County must make its contribution towards energizing that spirit and supporting this very artistic vitality. So I hope you will give your support as you have in the past to the arts. Thank you very much

LEG. FISHER:
Thank you, Muriel.

VICE CHAIRMAN CARACCILO:
Thank you. Mary Bess Phillips.

MS. PHILLIPS:
Hi, how are you today? My name is Mary Bess Phillips and I come from Greenport, New York. My husband and I own two, eighty-three foot off-shore draggers and a fish market in a commercial pack out dock. I'm here today representing Cornell Cooperative Extension on the marine

program.

I was going to give a long speech and then I decided not today, I've had a long weekend with customers and the Peconic Bay scallop season that is now finished. And one thought came to mind, a Legislator kept asking me one time, if the marine program wasn't funded, what void would be left?

I think the biggest thing that would be left as a void, that the extension works as a communication system between the residents, the commercial fisherman, the sport fishing industry and the regulatory agencies to help us stay in existence. We have a system that is five different agencies that govern us and everyone has to be an attorney to survive these days and the extension agents in the marine program help us survive.

The other thing is they also helped the industry gather assistance money, not only in the lobster industry, but in the fin fish and the shell fish industry. And they also heeded the words years ago when the County Legislators wanted us to become less of an east end function, but a west end agency.

And I can probably name off, although I don't have it in front of me now, many of the different County sections that have dealt with the agents throughout the east and west end. That's really all I have to say today.

VICE CHAIRMAN CARACCILO:

Thank you very much.

MS. PHILLIPS:

Okay. Thank you.

VICE CHAIRMAN CARACCILO:

Wally Broege.

MR. BROEGE:

Good morning. My name is Wally Broege. I'm the Director of the Suffolk County Historical Society in Riverhead. We are an authorized agency of Suffolk County or a contract agency. We have a museum in Riverhead with permanent and changing exhibitions. We promote educational programs there at the museum which largely focus on visiting school programs today, although there is some adult programming. And we have a library and archives, which is open to the public, although we don't circulate materials.

I've made presentations before a number of committees and also to two general meetings of the Legislature this year about our operating budget. I apologize to some of you if I'm a little bit redundant, but I feel as though my message is important and this time of year with things happening very quickly, the only way I can see to reach as many of the Legislators as possible is to make these presentations.

The County Executive's recommended budget for the Suffolk County

Historical Society cuts our funding from the adopted level in 2002 by 22.5 percent or forty-seven thousand six hundred and thirty-seven dollars. We are already facing a deficit for 2003. This would bring our total potential deficit to a little bit over seventy-seven thousand dollars and could mean the loss of one full-time person and four part-time people.

If the Legislature could restore the funds that the County Executive cut from the adopted level, the forty-seven thousand six hundred and thirty-seven dollars, I'd be able to save that one full-time person and perhaps two of the part-time people.

The Legislature added funds to our 2002 budget to make that curator's position possible. And as almost a direct result of having that position, we've been able to increase our fund-raising efforts. We've received a fifteen thousand dollar general operating support grant from the New York State Council on the Arts, that's part of a three year contract. Also a twenty-two thousand dollar, twenty-two thousand five hundred dollar grant for an exhibition that we're planning for 2003. That position is really critical for us.

In 2002 we took a number of important steps to balance our budget. We lost a part-time position, a librarian, which really hurt us in 2002. I'd also like to say that the loss of these positions is going to cost us money. Not only will it be difficult to raise money through grants, but we'll probably lose an additional twenty-seven thousand dollars in revenue that these positions help earn us.

In summary, I realize that this is a very difficult year for the Legislature. At the same time, I realize that forty-seven thousand dollars is not a great deal of money in a budget the size of Suffolk County's, and it -- the reinstitution or the replacing of that forty-seven thousand dollars would have a tremendous impact on our budget and the services that we can provide.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank members of the Legislature for supporting us in the past, which you have. If it hadn't been for your support, we wouldn't have had that position in 2002, the curators, and it's been critical for us. So thank you very much. I think that's it. Thank you.

VICE CHAIRMAN CARACCILO:

Thanks, Wally.

MR. BROEGE:

Mike, I have some literature I'd like to pass out. Would you like me to leave this with one person or just swing around?

VICE CHAIRMAN CARACCILO:

Jim will come and distribute that. Kathy Wattecamps followed by Tom Williams.

MS. WATTECAMPS:

Good morning. I'm Kathy Wattecamps and I'm representing the Long Island Museum of American Art History and Carriages in Stonybrook. In the past we've received funding from Suffolk County for some of our exhibits and without this funding we would not be able to offer these exhibits to the people of Suffolk County. So we were indeed grateful to this.

These exhibits and other museum offerings attract between fifty-five thousand and sixty thousand visitors to the museum each year. Last year we had fifty-seven thousand five hundred people who came to the museum. They enjoyed the day, stopped at our local restaurants, went into our shops and stayed in the hotels. It boosts revenue for the businesses in the area.

We also served twelve thousand students through museum school programs last year, and many of these programs are based on the exhibits that we have. They serve to inspire and motivate all our children in Suffolk County. We urge the continuation of funding for the cultural arts as a way to boost tourism in Suffolk County and to enhance our way of life.

VICE CHAIRMAN CARACCILO:

Thank you. Tom Williams followed by Diana Cherryholmes.

MR. WILLIAMS:

Good morning. Thank you very much. Thank you again for your patience and willingness to listen to us to ask you for our help.

I'm Tom Williams from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk and I am here to speak specifically about the Marine Program and general support for Cooperative Extension. We would hope that the recommendations from the office of Budget Review could be implemented for us and additionally put back some money for consumer sciences, the home economic programs and especially the Marine Program.

The County has funded our Marine Program for the past thirteen years and over that time the program has had a significant impact on

preserving and protecting and restoring coastal habitats and marine resources on Long Island. County dollars enable Cooperative Extension to obtain almost ten times the amount in grants from other sources.

We serve the County marine environment from the Vanderbilt Museum in Huntington to the just opened this Saturday Babylon Sports Fishing Alliance Center down on Cedar Beach. We had a lovely event, Virginia was there and Dave Bishop as well. It's an exciting adventure for us down in Babylon.

We also have the Marine Education Center in Southold and we provide marine education to over fifteen thousand children and youth throughout Suffolk County in almost every single school district.

The marine and fishing industry is really a multi-million dollar economic engine in Suffolk County and it is important for us to be able to continue to

provide them the help and assistance that we have. So we hope very much that you can help out and bring back our cut from the proposed twenty-one percent to something else. It just is an excessive cut for us.

I do have some fact sheets I'll send around. And again, thank you for all your support this year, especially you, Mike, with the restoration of the Marine Program and we really appreciate the support of the Legislature.

VICE CHAIRMAN CARACCILOLO:

Thank you. And I want to just echo your sentiment of appreciation to Legislator Lindsay and Legislator Postal, who along with this Legislative body, restored over ninety percent of the cuts in the 2002 budget that Cornell was facing. So I want to once again take this opportunity to publicly thank my colleagues, both present and those who have not yet arrived.

But, Tom, I want to just focus in, you and I have had some private conversations, as I've had with other interested parties about next year's budget, and I think realistically given the scope of next year's budgetary issues for the Legislature to try to resolve, it would not be realistic for you or others to expect full restoration. I don't think we're going to see anywhere near the ninety percent that we saw in 2002.

That said, I think it would be very helpful today, and certainly no more than within the next forty-eight hours, if you as the Executive Director could share with individual Legislators your priorities for restoration. Hopefully, that could somehow be incorporated with the adoption of a budget next year. No promises, no guarantees, it's a very difficult budget. The numbers get worse instead of better, so we have a lot of work to do.

I'm optimistic it can be done, as long as people are willing to cut across the Board. There cannot be any sacred cows from my perspective. We can't say to the public, pay more in taxes, we can't say to contract agencies, sacrifice, lay off, pay your employees less, and we have people in County government that are not affected.

everyone is going to have to share in the pain or I will not support any budget for next year. That was my position last year and that will be my position this year and every year that I sit in this Legislature. Thank you.

MR. WILLIAMS:

Thank you very much.

VICE CHAIRMAN CARACCILOLO:

Beth Levinthal is next. You're up.

MS. CHERRYHOLMES:

Good morning. My name is Diana Cherryholmes. I'm the Executive Director of the Huntington Arts Council. And I'd like to thank you for your past support of the arts and cultural community, not only in Huntington, but greater Suffolk County.

I'm here today representing our nearly ninety member arts organizations, all non-profits, our individual artists and our general membership. I'm here to ask you to continue to fund the arts and cultural program. It's a sound economic decision.

The arts serve many roles as a means for our youth to gain self confidence and to think more expressively. The arts can be entertaining and challenging and we are employers. We spend our funds locally and the arts contribute to draw new homeowners to Suffolk County. We're good business as evidenced by the County Executive seeking out Billy Joel to represent Long Island for the -- to represent Long Island tourism, a former Huntington resident and now living on the east end.

The Huntington Arts Council calculates that our annual budget of almost eight hundred thousand dollars a year translate into spending over sixty-six million dollars by arts audiences in Suffolk County. Nationally, America's non-profit arts industry generates a hundred and thirty-four billion dollars in economic activity every year.

So, I ask you today to please replace the funds eliminated by the County Executive as well as to disburse the room tax funds based on the estimates rather than waiting until you've collected all those room tax funds. By delaying disbursement of those room tax funds will decimate some -- all volunteer non-profit arts organizations, which will critically affect small communities and villages throughout Suffolk County.

By continuing to fund the arts and cultural activities and adding perhaps to the pool of funds generated by the hotel and motel tax, will prove that the members of the Legislature in Suffolk County to be leaders in support of arts and cultural programs at the community level. By showing such a level of commitment, the good will you will receive from the arts and cultural community will be astounding and significant.

So again, I'd like to thank you again for your past support of the cultural programs in Suffolk County and in Huntington.

VICE CHAIRMAN CARACCILO:

Thank you. Beth Levinthal followed by Maria Loreta Celitan.

MS. LEVINTHAL:

Good morning. My name is Beth Levinthal and I'm the Executive Director of the Heckscher Museum of Art in Huntington. And I want to thank you for this opportunity to speak with you all this morning.

In thinking about what I would like to say this morning, I was looking through some literature and I found something that I felt better stated my feeling than I actually could, and it's just a very brief preface from the book Art of the Western World that I'd just like to read for you this moment.

"From the dawn of civilization to the present day, our arts have been ever present and essential. They have served as a physical and spiritual bridge that have helped us understand the workings of the human soul and in times of anguish and sorrow, have offered solace and helped us to reconcile life. The arts and all cultures and in all times are not a luxury, but a necessity without which we would be vastly impoverished."

The Heckscher Museum of Art serves over fifty thousand individuals each year with our changing exhibitions, which you all have been quite supportive of in the past and we are greatly appreciative of that support. You understand the importance of our programs, particularly for the children of our community. We see over ten thousand children a year throughout Suffolk County and we serve over fifty-two school districts throughout Long Island. Very important work that we're doing with children from very disparate economic backgrounds and minority children that we're working with in mentoring programs and in educating them to learn how to speak about art with their peers and you've been very supportive of those endeavors and we are very thankful for that.

But as I stand here today as a representative of the arts community, I also stand here today as an individual in Suffolk, who lives in Suffolk County and I feel that we are all confronted with a very frightening prospect, and that is one where we are diminishing literally the funding for our cultural American heritage and it is one that I don't think any of us can afford to do, particularly at this time in our nation's history.

We are entering into one of the most pivotal and uncertain moments in our history. It's a time when the arts are more essential in the lives of our communities than perhaps ever before. The arts embody the ambitions, the dreams and the values of our culture, and as leaders of our community you more than anyone understand how necessary it is to protect and preserve that valuable culture for all of our people. And you also understand the quality of life that the arts provide for us all.

The arts also provide vital economic support as you have heard for this region. As of the last survey done in 1998, I understand that just a little under twenty percent of the tourist rate on Long Island

is due to the desire for cultural arts experiences, it's greater than the desire to supporting events or for those experiences with the natural environment.

The arts bring millions of dollars into the County each year. Local businesses are impacted positively by tourist dollars spent in their shops, restaurants and printing establishments and so forth. The arts are a year round industry and they employ thousands of individuals who live, spend and pay taxes in our County.

The actions of the Legislature may have serious, deleterious effects on the cultural arts industry that would have certainly negative consequences for many of the smaller arts organizations in our community.

I understand that the hotel tax, the room tax is being also considered as something that we should wait and see until all of the receipts have been in before we disburse it and that could be a quite terrible impact for many, many of the arts organizations in our community.

So, I ask you as you deliberate on the 2003 budget, and on future budgets that you are to come across, to please look carefully and not make the prospect of red ink a take precedent over the responsibility and duty that our leaders have to protect and preserve and indeed to nourish our cultural arts. Thank you.

VICE CHAIRMAN CARACCILOLO:

Thank you, ma'am. Charlotte Sky. You're next, after this speaker.

MS. CELITAN:

My name is Maria Loreta Celitan. I'm the Artistic Director of Soly Sombra Spanish Dance Company and I represent one of the smaller art groups than those that have spoken before me, but I just wanted to come here today to tell you what the small bit of funding we receive every year from Suffolk County means to us.

Over the years it's allowed us to grow from a group of one guitarist and one singer to now a group of over twenty musicians and dancers that represent us not only here on Long Island, but we have become one of the premiere dance and music companies of Long Island, recently performing at the University of Georgia, Hamilton College and Jacob's Pillow, which is probably the premiere dance festival in the United States.

So we can say Long Island is not a cultural wasteland as most people think, we give over five major concerts in Suffolk County every year. Basically, many of them are free in the parks in the summer, open to seniors and children. And I can tell you without the funding we receive, we will not be able to do that next year. We will literally not be able to do that next year.

And the works and the programs that we develop in these concerts filter not only down into the concerts, but into the many, many arts and education programs we do in the school. We do well over a hundred arts and education programs in the schools throughout the year.

So I'm coming here today to really ask you to consider putting some of the money back into the budget for small groups such as us, because ultimately when civilizations pass away, which ours will do, we think no great civilizations do, but they all do, the only thing that is really remembered and left to them is their cultural and artistic achievements. So thank you very much.

VICE CHAIRMAN CARACCILOLO:

Thank you, ma'am.

LEG. FISHER:
Mr. Chair?

VICE CHAIRMAN CARACCILO:
Yes. Legislator Fisher has a question.

LEG. FISHER:
Okay. I had had the pleasure early on in your career to have you come to my classroom, my Spanish classroom. When you speak about the cuts that you would have, are you talking about cutting your staff if the --

MS. CELITAN:
No. We would have to cut our programs, because the funding we receive really enables us to do our concerts and presentations.

LEG. FISHER:
Not your BOCES programs, though, the kinds of programs that educators rely on for you to come in the workshops?

MS. CELITAN:
No, but what happens when we develop our concert programs, our programs to the public during the year, that's really when we do our choreography and develop the presentations, so then we are able to take them into the schools.

LEG. FISHER:
I see.

MS. CELITAN:
But that is the money that we basically use to do our programs.

LEG. FISHER:
Okay. And that also creates an education for adults when you are, you know, performing in the parks, etcetera, you're not --

MS. CELITAN:
Oh, yes. We do our programs always as a multi-cultural representation. We try to promote multi-cultural understanding. Of course, we represent, our art represents a Hispanic art, but we try to promote multi-cultural understanding also within the development of the art form, which has many, many different routes, Arabic, Jewish, Greek, Roman, so we always bring that out.

LEG. FISHER:
Thank you.

MS. CELITAN:
Thank you.

LEG. FIELDS:

Charlotte Sky followed by Harry Whittelsbey -- Whittelsey.

MS. SKY:

Hello. Okay. Thank you for this opportunity. We have had funding in the past from the Suffolk County Legislature and we're very, very appreciative and very worried if any of this would be discontinued.

I represent -- I'm actually the Co-director of the Cinema Arts Centre. And when we started thirty years ago, we were called the New Community Cinema and mainly we had that name because we felt that when we came to Suffolk County, we felt that there was a great need for the arts, especially in the film arts. And we have been proven to be very right in this, because we now have a hundred and eighty thousand attendances a year and many people come to us to say that they have moved into Suffolk County because of the Cinema Arts Centre and many of the other, you know, cultural centers that are all through Suffolk County.

Actually, I'm not going to really talk too much about what all of the arts stimulate as far as the money that is poured into the community as far as the businesses and the advantages that come from that, I will say that the amount of any funding that we get is spent in Suffolk County. And that has been, aside from the employees that we have, which are about thirty now, so all of this really impacts on the economic side. The people have talked about that so much.

And when we arrived here thirty years ago I have to say that people thought of, especially Suffolk County, because Nassau County still had a little bit more, that it was like what they call a bedroom community, that there were malls, shopping malls and houses and that was it. Well, I think it's been proven wrong. I think people really enjoy coming and living in Suffolk County now because of the arts.

And one of the things that we're very pleased about is that we have a lot of multi-cultural festivals all year and we have been lucky in that we have people who come from the, what should I say, all of these ethnic communities and feel very good about being able to participate in these international cultural festivals, film festivals.

And just about three weeks ago we did a Chinese festival, Chinese film festival and we had many of the Chinese delegation that came from China feel very, very good and very proud to be in Suffolk County because of what they saw happening here.

We have about two thousand students that come each year to participate in the school programs that we put on and this has also been very much of a stimulation to the school curriculums because we receive letters from the teachers and also the students participate in discussions following the film programs.

So, all of this I just want to say has come from being able to know that we -- the funding will continue to stimulate this programming. I think that everyone else has been saying enough of, you know, what I already prepared to say, so I say thank you so very much for everything you have done and I hope you will continue.

LEG. FIELDS:

Thank you.

LEG. FISHER:

Thank you.

LEG. FIELDS:

Harry Whittelsey followed by Linda Morrissey.

MR. WHITTELSEY:

Give me a minute so I can read. Good morning. My name is Harry Whittelsey. I've lived in Suffolk County for over thirty years. I'm a businessman, I own three businesses. I have over a hundred and fifty employees who work for me in Suffolk County. I'm a taxpayer, I'm also the President of the Huntington Arts Council.

Real estate values are supported by the arts and I don't want you to forget it. Long Islanders choose to live here because Long Island has some special jewels. Our beaches, our water, our forests and our arts. Suffolk used to be a bedroom community. It ain't no more. This is a community that people stay in to enjoy and live with the arts. They don't travel to New York anymore. They used to and they will again if you cut it out.

Your past support has been greatly appreciated. You must consider Suffolk and the arts as one. Your failure to provide funding to the arts is shortsighted. Suffolk will suffer, people will visit the city and give Mr. Bloomberg their tax dollars when they go to see theater, video, movies, galleries and the variety of arts projects that exist throughout Suffolk County.

We as an arts community have been hurt more than any other organization since 9/11. You've got to drill down into the County budget, get into the departments and cut overhead. Gentlemen, I've gone through three recessions in my businesses and I have done it each and every time. It's time for the County Legislators to get the departments to drill down and cut their overhead.

LEG. FIELDS:

You said gentlemen, what about us?

MR. WHITTELSEY:

Ladies, I'm sorry. And I promise you I won't forget you. Please don't forget us.

There are over ninety thousand residents who attend the Huntington Arts Council Summer Festival. There are over thirty thousand students that we visit in the classroom and expose to the arts that they learn to love and enjoy. There are thousands of residents who visit our

galleries. These are residents of Suffolk County, please support them as we have you. Thank you.

LEG. FIELDS:

Linda Morrissey followed by Patricia Snyder.

MS. MORRISEY:

My name is Linda Morrissey, I'm the General Manager of the Long Island Philharmonic. I'm here today like everyone else to request the replacement of the funding for the arts programs. I'd like to thank the Legislature for the support we have received in the past from Suffolk County. We've received a small amount, but it's imperative that we receive that funding for the programs that we produce for Suffolk County residents.

This funding assisted the Long Island Philharmonic, the only professional orchestra on Long Island, to add a free summer parks concert at Brookhaven Amphitheater last year to continue it with this year. It would be a shame if we could no longer offer that free program to the Suffolk County residents.

This grant also allows the Long Island Philharmonic to offer arts and education programs in schools, one-on-one, musician to student programs to the different school districts in Long Island in Suffolk County. We also are able to perform four youth concerts in two areas of Suffolk, in Stonybrook and Southampton. About ten thousand students learned from these programs.

We are researching and expanding our programs to Easthampton. We will not be able to have these programs if we do not receive the funding from Suffolk County.

In July 2003, we're entering our 25th season and will be offering the future -- we would be offering -- sorry. It would be a tragedy if we could no longer offer the future of Suffolk County these programs. Thank you.

LEG. FIELDS:

Thank you. Linda Morrissey.

MS. MORRISEY:

That was me.

LEG. FIELDS:

Patricia Snyder followed by Susan Hirschstein.

MS. SNYDER:

Hi. I'm Patricia Snyder, Executive Director of East End Arts Council. The

County funding is not only instrumental, but provides vitality on Main Street, Riverhead, where we are located.

And by example, I want to tell you about our Friday gallery opening, that really demonstrates how our funding supports the vitality of Riverhead. On Friday we had at least three hundred visitors who came to our opening free of charge. They had the opportunity to not only

view the artwork that recently got put up, but they listened to an artist talk and they listened to our performances by our students.

We have a community school of the arts summer grounds and our students are ages six months to ninety years old. So, we've reached a lot of people.

But also, in addition, we've had the pleasure of welcoming a non-English speaking group of adults in the gallery who came to practice their English skills. So, it's a group that doesn't normally associate with our membership, so having this gallery opening was very supportive of that. So, we're very pleased to have that and we're willing to bring that to your attention. Thank you.

LEG. FISHER:
Thank you.

LEG. FIELDS:
Thank you. Susan Hirschstein, then Jim McMahon. And then I would like to ask the Parks Commissioner and Planning Commissioner I guess to come up and just talk about the budget a little bit. Thank you.

MS. HIRSCHSTEIN:
Good morning. And thank you for this opportunity to address you. I'm Susan Hirschstein. I'm the Director of Development of the Heckscher Museum. And I want to start by thanking you for your past support of funding for the arts in Suffolk County.

The arts are an essential element in improving the quality of life of our residents and attracting businesses and jobs and visitors. Many art organizations, both large and small, have suffered severe funding cuts due to the poor economy, effects of September 11th and declining corporate contributions. Funding losses at this point will force some of the art organizations to cut critical community programs and jobs which may never be restored.

The arts are a critical part of the economy. A recent study, excuse me, by noted Economist Ray Perryman conducted in Texas shows that for every one dollar invested in the arts, there is more than a two hundred and ninety-eight dollar impact on the economy. The arts are an important part of the economy for Suffolk to attract tourism, business development and residents.

The arts are also a vital element of the educational success, being linked to superior student performances across the broad range of measures. They

provide a necessary creative outlet for our youth and a critical component in the intervention programs aimed at youths at risk. For every young person deterred from gang activity or drugs through alternative programs, society saves hundreds of thousands of dollars in reduced crime and the positive impact associated with productive members of society.

Arts groups provide a significant portion of the arts programming available in our public schools at a very low cost and have developed many innovative programs aimed at deterring at-risk youth.

Corporate support of the arts is stimulated by the investment made by the County. Without financial incentives from the County, the arts are devalued and less attractive to corporate investments. Why should corporations take an interest if our County doesn't? Thank you.

LEG. FIELDS:

Thank you. Jim McMahon.

MR. MC MAHON:

Good morning. I'm Jim McMahon from the Town of Southold. I'm the Community Development Director in Southold. I've worked with Cornell for over twenty years. It's an agency that the Town of Southold turns to when we have water quality issues, farming, fishing issues and we felt so strongly last year when Cornell was cut, that the Town of Southold provided Cornell with a hundred and fifty thousand dollars of funding.

We look to them every time we have a water quality issue, we look to them to help us maintain our fishing and farming industries and we would hope that when the County reviews its budget, that Cornell would be looked on favorably and some of the cuts that we all know are coming could be reinstated so that it maintains itself as one of the best organizations I think that you find throughout the State when it comes to dealing with these environmental issues. Thank you.

LEG. FISHER:

Thank you.

LEG. FIELDS:

Thank you. Commissioner Judy Gordon and Tom Isles, please, if you could come up.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Is this on?

LEG. FIELDS:

Yes, it is.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Good morning.

LEG. FIELDS:
Good morning.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:
Who's first?

LEG. FIELDS:
Ladies.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:
Ladies first, okay. Thank you. Judith Gordon. Good morning. Happy to be here this morning.

I think in the -- what we're facing economically and in the County, while I did not prepare the budget that I have in front of me, I believe it's a realistic plan for the Department to deliver its services in the economic climate that we're in.

Expenses minus revenues in terms of our budget are, are per capita expense netting, a per capita expense of four dollars and fourteen cents per person.

We saw marked increase in attendance this year, which is probably a combination of good weather in addition to a greater number of people staying home, still feeling the effects of 9/11. More people are visitations equates to more maintenance to deal with wear and tear on our golf courses, beaches, campgrounds and historic sights. In order to maintain this level of visitation, resources are critical.

In addition, I disagree with the removal of any funding from the 2002 General Fund, we still have nine and a half more weeks of operating expenses. Parks don't close, parks remain open. Campgrounds are open, our hunting season begins and our historic sites continue to be visited.

I would like to address a couple of issues that were brought up in the Budget Review Office review of the budget. One of the -- one of the recommendations was that Budget Review is recommending that we abolish the Division of Sports and Recreation. And I think the basis for abolishing that division is that they feel that they have not met the goals and objectives for which they were created.

And I don't think that anybody envisioned that Sports and Recreation would accomplish all of their goals and -- all of their goals in the first fifteen months of operation, rather it's something that's going to evolve overtime. The development of programs to support and encourage all levels of sports and recreational activities, an area which we feel that we did excel in, but there is no mention of our program development and its success in the B.R.O. report.

The Division of Sports and Recreation is not struggling for recognition, rather gaining recognition with each program project we present to the residents of Suffolk County. The Division of Sports and Recreation is registered with the New York State E Grants Program. Although they have not received any grant money at this time, they are actively researching grant opportunities.

One area that's completely left out of the B.R.O. report is Sports and Recreation's involvement in the Greenways Program. Since the establishment of Sports and Recreation, they have taken control of the greenways active recreation component and established guidelines and standards for the development of these properties that will benefit the residents of Suffolk County.

We think that they have established themselves as an important part of the Parks Department and have begun to achieve the goals and objectives of this division. And again, I have to reemphasize that I don't think that we felt they would accomplish all of their goals and

objectives in one year, but that that would be something that would be ongoing.

The organic maintenance fund, our new fund 477, I think similar comments were made for the 2001 budget, that this may be not the proper usage of this money. We completely disagree, with the exception of the fact that we would need thirty-five thousand dollars in the operating fund for inorganic supplies, because we are prohibited by legislation from purchasing any inorganic supplies from that, from that fund.

We believe that the use of these funds for the golf courses, which are immediately adjacent to the Great South Bay and Peconic estuaries will help to reduce non-point source pollution and implement the best management practices for water quality protection.

There is one area of the budget that was not funded that if, if it would need to come out of our existing budget, would definitely be a problem, and that's the funding of the automatic defibrillators. If that were to be funded, that money would definitely need to be added, we could not handle that under the present funding.

Employee rentals. I think some of you are aware that we have formed a committee to look at this situation and I fully expect that that committee will be prepared to make a recommendation -- make a recommendation within the first quarter of the year.

In terms of the alternative funding, there is a Legislative committee that's been established that will be, will have it's first meeting in November and I look forward to that process and I think that that's still something that we need to consider as an alternative to the existing Park's budget. And I would happy to answer any questions.

LEG. FIELDS:

I have one.

LEG. FISHER:

I have one too.

LEG. FIELDS:

And we have questions from everyone else on the panel. About a year ago I tried to, in fact, I passed a bill asking for a grant writer that would actually derive monies from outside, not even from us paying that person, and it was vetoed. And since that time I have asked again and again and again and again and again when we are going to put a grant writer in the County Parks Department, to which I believe we have been funded. It's a position that was put into the budget.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

At this point in time, with the resources that we have and regarding the early retirements that we had in the Park's system, we felt it necessary to earmark that position into the Parks, into the Park's operating program.

I know that a number of people have been talking about hiring a grants analyst. I think that the Department has done fairly well in securing capital grant monies that we use to a large extent for our historic sites. That in and of itself is sometimes problematic in us spending the capital money, as you all know we sometimes have a difficult time about that.

In term of operating expenses, if we were able to find a grant writer who could find us operating expense -- operating money to help our PARK operations, I would be more than happy. I am very, very skeptical that there are any operating grants out there. Most of the grants that we are aware of are more for capital projects.

Also, because we do do some research on this in the Department, those of us who make the effort and the time to do that, most of the private foundations are very reluctant to grant to governor. If we had our own non-profit organization, perhaps we might be able to better attract granting opportunities like that.

But we have in the past applied for grants from private foundations and because we were a government entity, they were reluctant to fund or they have it written into their foundations that they don't grant to governments.

LEG. FIELDS:

But if you have groups that work with the County, and you do have many non-profit groups that work with the County in the Parks Department, why not have a grant writer and they can put the money that they get into the non-profit and then it can be put into the Parks?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Well, you would have to -- the non-profit would have to -- would have to apply for the grant on your behalf. Some granting organizations, you know, would prefer to have the owners of, the stakeholders involved with it apply for the -- for those granting opportunities.

LEG. FIELDS:

Okay.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

But I just need to re-emphasize, Legislator Fields, that in what we are faced with in 2003, we really thought that the better use of those funds Department-wise was in the operations of the Parks.

LEG. FIELDS:

The web site for the Parks, sports, is that up and running?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes, it's up and running.

LEG. FIELDS:

Okay. Legislator Alden first and then Legislator Fisher.

LEG. ALDEN:

Hi, Commissioner. You might not have an answer to this today, but Legislator Caracciolo has pending a resolution that would put cameras in certain areas.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

yes, I am aware of that, and we are in the process of doing research on that.

LEG. ALDEN:

That's something that's going to have to be done, I would say, a lot faster than, you know, what's been going on with it, because that's revenues that we're talking about. So there's two ways of doing things, either you can cut programs, cut expenses or you can enhance your revenues.

Now, if we're not getting paid everything that we should be getting paid, for instance, and it's two or three years ago now, Legislator Caracciolo and I looked into what was happening over in Bergen Point, and the County was behind somewhere around three to five hundred thousand dollars in collecting the revenues from there. And since then they've supposedly come up to speed on that, but --

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

We are up-to-date now.

LEG. ALDEN:

Okay. And I didn't see a report recently on that, but I'm glad to hear that. But there's other places in the County, and every place I go and look, it seems like, you know, because I do have a business background, that I wouldn't run a business like that. And we don't want that to exist for any longer really right now, because when you have situations that, and I don't want to do it specifically, you know, right now, but I can get it over to your office at any time that you want that.

We're operating out of cash like cigar boxes and things like that, there's basically no cash registers, there's no checks and balances on anything and we're talking about millions and millions of dollars worth of revenue if you add it all up. So every little spot, and even if it's only something that's generating a couple of hundred thousand dollars, that's got to be looked at, there's got to be some kind of cash controls in place. And there's also got to be some kind of accounting system whereby we can, you know, we've got a checks and balance, not some, and I don't mean to disparage somebody that's, you know, like seventeen, eighteen, nineteen years old and just coming into their first job, but that isn't the person that I want responsible for the County in reporting the cash to me. I want a supervisor, I want some kind of checks and balance and there doesn't seem to be that.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Again, we have, over the last several months we have been doing some research in that area and we're planning to come up with some kind of response to Legislator Caracciolo.

LEG. ALDEN:

Okay.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

I do have to say, though, that in the existing budget, we don't necessarily have the funding for that. And one of the thoughts that I had was that maybe we write into the concessionaires' agreements that they have to provide that.

LEG. ALDEN:

I don't want Colonel Sanders watching the chicken coop either, and if I'm owner of the chickens, because they're all going to get slaughtered. I want some checks and balances and I want it to go beyond the scope that Legislator Caracciolo has put in there. So a response to his resolution is not going to help me, I want a broader response as far as, not just about cameras, I want, I want a full -- something implemented or something that could be able to be implemented, a full policy that's going to give a check and balance on all of it.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Well, as I said, that's going to entail additional funding.

LEG. ALDEN:

If that's what your report says, if you want to buy cash registers or something like that, then we can intelligently look at that, because there's going to be projection that, okay, we're losing 4.2 million dollars, if we spend a hundred thousand dollars for cash registers and one more supervisor and we're going, you know, there's going to be a net there, that's fine and that's something that we should be looking at, but we shouldn't be operating the way we are.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

We will continue to look at that, Legislator Alden.

LEG. ALDEN:

Well, how soon can I expect a response, though, either a plan or --

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Well, as I said --

LEG. ALDEN:

We've been waiting all year, basically. And actually, Mike and I have been working on this for about four years, so now it's dragging out a little bit too long.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Okay. Well, I apologize for the transition --

LEG. ALDEN:

No, I know, you just were appointed. I know.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

And I understand, I would feel the same way as you, I'm sure. And as I said, we have been doing the research and I can probably, I would expect I should be able to put something together before the end of this calendar year.

LEG. ALDEN:

That's -- I don't think that that's -- that's not an acceptable time frame. There should have been some kind of product that you took over when you came in there. We're going through a budget process right now, and if we're losing a million dollars worth of revenue and we're going to turn around and increase somebody's taxes, we're not going to do it. We need to have -- we need to have, we need to have cash controls or we need to have a proposed plan in place very, very soon. And I would say, you know, it should be weeks rather than, you're suggesting months.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Well, we'll try and do it sooner rather than later then.

LEG. ALDEN:

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

We will try and speed up that process.

LEG. ALDEN:

Thank you.

LEG. FIELDS:

Legislator Fisher.

LEG. FISHER:

I'm sorry, I have to get used to this, but I was going to say Commissioner Gordon, it felt like Batman.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

you're not the first one to say that.

LEG. FISHER:

I'm sure.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

I was thinking of changing all the signs to Gotham City.

LEG. FISHER:

Interesting emblem you could have, a logo. A short question, who comprises the Legislative committee to which you referred a minute ago?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

For alternative funding?

LEG. FISHER:

Yes.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

There's seventeen people on the committee.

LEG. FISHER:

Okay.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Fifteen or seventeen people on the committee. And Legislator Fields might be able to answer that question easier than I can. I know we have a representative from the County Executive, we have representatives from several user groups in the community, the Nature

Conservancy is one.

LEG. FIELDS:

Finance.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Finance. Myself, obviously. Legislator Fields, a Parks trustee. And I probably haven't hit everything, but there are --

LEG. FIELDS:

I can give that to you, it's in the resolution.

LEG. FISHER:

Okay. And I'm sure this is in the resolution too, but I just wanted to recap it. What is the stated objective or goal of that committee?

LEG. FIELDS:

It was my bill, so I'll --

LEG. FISHER:

In alternative funding.

LEG. FIELDS:

It's to look for --

LEG. FISHER:

Actually, I wanted the Commissioner to answer it.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

It's to look for alternative ways to fund the Park's Department.

LEG. FISHER:

Okay.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

I.E. perhaps it's a suggestion is a Park's district, although that's probably not the only thing that we'll probably be looking at.

LEG. FISHER:

Okay. Because the reason I'm going back through this is because you

have just said that there is one form of alternative funding that doesn't seem to be feasible, which is grants, am I correct?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Well, in terms of operating expenses, there are granting opportunities out there for capital. And I think, could we do better? Probably. But we have received capital grants in the past and we continue to have some that are in effect right now. In terms of operating expenses, I think that that -- I don't know whether there would be granting opportunities out there.

LEG. FISHER:

Is the committee looking at grants as alternatives?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Well, again, Legislator Fisher, the committee has not yet met yet. The first meeting I think is scheduled for two weeks from now.

LEG. FISHER:

Okay.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

So we will be reporting back to the Legislature.

LEG. FISHER:

Okay. Thank you.

LEG. FIELDS:

Okay. Commissioner Isles.

MR. ISLES:

Good morning. The Planning Department consists of the Planning Division of about twenty-five employees and the Real Estate Division of about forty-five employees. The budget that's proposed by the County Executive would essentially continue the current programs, understanding that we did have a significant hit with the early retirement program. Within the Planning Division itself there was about a fifteen percent staff reduction, overall for the Department about eleven percent.

The Planning Department, as this Committee certain knows, is involved in a number of statutory functions, including the administration of the Suffolk County Planning Commission and the Council of Environmental Quality, to name those two. And specifically, the Division of Real Estate has a number of statutory functions dealing with the inventory disposition and purchase of real estate for the County of Suffolk.

In addition to statutory functions, there are also functions that are done by the Planning Department as directed by the County Executive, the Legislature or the Planning Commission itself. This includes a number of special studies and reports that are done by the Department on a regular basis and special planning services. To name a few of

those that have been done in the past year, just as way of reference, the Suffolk County Planning Department completed a report regarding aqua culture in the Peconic and Gardiners Bay. We're also involved in smart growth planning for the County extensively as well as the administration of the farmland program and the farmland select Committee, the open space program.

We also do extensive cartographic functions for the County. We're involved in the north shore land use study as part of the Long Island Sound study, a rather comprehensive effort involving the north shore of Suffolk County.

We run the affordable housing program. We're the regional depository for the US census and provide that information to both Nassau and Suffolk entities, both public and private entities. We provided services to a number of municipalities, including Patchogue, Bellport,

Babylon, Riverhead and Southold, to name a few.

The Division of Real Estate, as I mentioned, has a number of functions dealing with real estate obviously, including the inventory and management of close to four thousand parcels that are accumulated by the County for non-payment of taxes and other purposes. They also do extensive work with condemnation with the County Attorney's Office. We're also in charge of the sale of surplus County properties. The auction this past May yielded about twelve million dollars in property sales and also purchase under the number of open space acquisition programs done by the County.

As far as the comments of the Budget Review Office, I'm in general agreement with the comments overall. We understand that these are difficult times and we -- in terms of the three issues identified, staffing, the closing of auction parcels and revenues, in the sense of staffing we generally don't disagree with the comments. We have an issue dealing with one of the positions in the Planning Department, one of the support positions that's I would disagree with, but essentially the idea to eliminate a position, we don't disagree with, just which position is the key one.

As far as auction parcels remaining unclosed, I can give you an update that this is something that has been a key priority. Of the twenty-two parcels identified up until I believe the November of '99 auction that have not been closed, at this point we have six parcels that remain to be closed.

In addition, in terms of the revenues, the -- there's a proposal in terms of County revenues, a practice by the County Treasurer's Office of charging those losses on tax acquired parcels against a certain revenue code. I don't necessarily disagree with this, I'd like to have a conversation with the County Treasurer and with the County Attorney to understand that a little bit better.

That's basically accounting for when the County gets tax defaulted properties in the Pine Barrens, those are automatically put into a Park's category, the back taxes that are due are then charged against

this revenue account. So we don't disagree with that in principle, just a matter of how that actually occurs and I'm not sure if the proposed method will actually work.

Fundamentally I would just make the final point that the Department of Planning, including the Division of Real Estate, is a revenue center in the

County thanks to real estate. The expenses of the Department are vastly superseded by the revenues that are brought in through both the rental property inventory as well as the sale of surplus County properties.

If you have any questions, I'll do my best to try to answer those questions. Joining me here too is Christine Costigan, the Director of Real Estate.

LEG. FIELDS:

I have one, Legislator Bishop has another. One of the recommendations says the contracts for all auctioned properties not closed after two years should be rescinded and the properties reauctoned. You said there are six properties left that have not been closed?

MR. ISLES:

There are six properties that are identified from the May '96 auction until November of '99, November of '99, so there are twenty-two parcels identified on that list. Of those twenty-two, all have been closed except for six.

LEG. FIELDS:

Okay. So out of those six, why have they not been closed?

MS. COSTIGAN:

Let me give you an example. There were title problems, that's why. I mean, for instance, one of these properties was a property that had a federal tax lien on it as a result of the McNamara problems in Brookhaven. And the buyer has been diligent and done everything the buyer can do and it's been a matter of writing back and forth with the Attorney General and the courts and getting copies and waiting for the liens to be expunged.

It is my feeling for instance in that example, and the others are similar, that the buyer has acted diligently and responsibly and that the County made the transaction and the only reason it hasn't closed is other people haven't, you know, gotten the liens expunged.

So I think that that's in fairness, and from a business point of view that that should be closed even though it's past two years. But they're all like that, the six of them have these thorny title problems, which have taken time, estates are involved where the estates have to be cleared, but in each instance the buyer has been diligent, prompt and courteous and indeed waited for these things to be resolved.

LEG. FIELDS:

Legislator Bishop. Thank you.

LEG. BISHOP:

You asked one question I had, so I only have one left, which is the increase in

the dollar amount that you've requested for outside appraisers, can you provide a justification for that?

MR. ISLES:
Okay.

LEG. BISHOP:
I think it's significant.

MS. COSTIGAN:
We now have to double the number of appraisals that we get, because of the 425 legislation for larger acquisitions, we have to get two appraisals, that's why.

LEG. BISHOP:
All right. It's that simple. Okay. Thank you. And that's what it is, it's just times two --

MS. COSTIGAN:
Yes, we just doubled.

LEG. BISHOP:
Thank you.

LEG. FIELDS:
There are two speakers. Both Legislator Bishop and I have another meeting, and I think Legislator Cooper, so I'm going to ask Legislator Alden to hear the last two speakers so that we apologize that we have to leave for another meeting.

LEG. BISHOP:
What's the topic?

LEG. ALDEN:
Arts funding and cultural affairs. I'm not sure on the pronunciation of the last name, Rothbard, Michael Rothbard.

MR. ROTHBARD:
I thank you for giving me this, I'll make it a brief opportunity. My name is Michael Rothbard. I'm the Executive Director of IMAC, Inter Media Arts Center, Inc., in Huntington. It's a thirty year old not-for-profit performing arts center and we are -- our theater, our hard-seated theater, like an old movie theater palace that's been turned into a concert hall performing arts center.

We see between thirty to forty thousand people who come to our theater to I guess counter balance the stresses of this -- of their every day lives of this continually stressful society and I can't tell you how many people have come up to me and literally grabbed me by the lapels and said, I need to have something on the weekends to make my life a

little more enjoyable, because I guess everybody is putting up with what they have to put up with and the stress continues to increase.

I can tell you that the arts always seem to be for some reason a small priority, but sometimes things are sort of deceiving, because if you were to ask most people what do they think the primary sector is, is it the commercial sector or is it the not-for-profit sector, but if you think about it, the commercial sector has to sit on top of a not-for-profit infrastructure if there's not government, hospital, schools, law enforcement, churches and the arts, you don't have the fabric through which the rest could actually function.

And that's how towns got formed in the west. First there was nothing, then there was an infrastructure, then people were able to come and do the commercial aspects of their lives. So, it's a mistake, I think, to sort of discount what the services are that the arts present to our everyday society. And your one dollar of support leverages eleven dollars in hope from not-for-profit idealists who actually do what they do not for the money, but they need the money to do what they do.

And I can tell you this over the thirty years, when these organizations get decimated and they collapse, unlike gardens, they don't grow back, they're gone. They're just gone. So think about it. Suffolk County has come a long, long way from being at one point referred to as a cultural wasteland to an actual world class competitor or supplier of cultural performing arts services and other kinds of like cultural services.

I do implore you to reconsider the, from my point of view, the senseless recommendation of zero. I would like to see an increase, even a modest one, because even if you look at what we're getting now, and I remember how the hotel tax started, somehow we were going to get a percentage and somehow it's a percentage of a percentage. So, getting smaller.

So, I implore this body to reconsider, to support the arts. They are an important part of what our citizens have come to expect as a quality of life issue. And I'll stop there.

LEG. ALDEN:

Okay. Thank you. Any comments or questions?

LEG. BISHOP:

Very good.

LEG. ALDEN:

Thanks a lot. We have one more card. Allison Burke.

Legislator Bishop can correct me if I'm wrong, but it's not us reconsidering, right, because it wasn't us in the first place, so it would be to consider what was presented to us.

LEG. BISHOP:
Right.

LEG. ALDEN:
Good. Allison, it's all yours.

MS. BURKE:
Thank you. Good morning. Thank you for giving me this opportunity. This is something I've never done before, I've never been in this building and it's the first time I'm speaking in this type of arrangement.

I'm a volunteer and member of the Huntington Choral Society. We are a singing organization that's just had our fortieth anniversary. Our members include retirees, corporate employees, students, people of all ages.

And to reiterate what the gentleman before me had mentioned, the stress level and the purpose of our organization for people to come to us and enjoy some classical music and come together as a community as they have for many years is something that we really hope to continue. And the grant money that we apply for annually, which is par of the budget I believe that you're considering that's up for being cut down to zero, I believe, I mean that money helps us to, to bring in some orchestra people and do some production work that helps to produce the classic works that we, that we perform, such as Mozart's Requiem, Alicia all the greats we do and we like to do them, to the level that they should be performed.

All of Suffolk County, Nassau County and the metropolitan area, I truly believe that being able to come to community functions at our local high schools and to be able to bring these -- the performances that we do to nursing homes and other types of groups of people, they truly enjoy a small bit of relief of the arts instead of having to go into the city or not being able to afford to do larger, more expensive, more expensive entertainments.

So I thank you for the opportunity. And please consider funding, funding the arts again. And it would be great to have an increase, but we depend on that small amount of grant money to help us do what we do. And as I said, we've been doing to for forty years and our members comprise all types of residents in our community that support, you know, the politics here.

LEG. ALDEN:
Thank you for coming down. Any questions?

LEG. BISHOP:
No. Thank you. Hope you come back.

LEG. ALDEN:
And again, if you want to come back at twelve o'clock, we're going to be discussing the budget a little bit more. I don't think that we have a -- do we have a proposed omnibus to put forth at twelve o'clock?

LEG. BISHOP:

No.

LEG. ALDEN:

We're just going to be looking at the proposal that the County Executive sent over to us at twelve o'clock today, so if you want to come back and fill out a card and speak before us then, you're more than welcome. And then within the next couple of weeks I would imagine we're going to stick to -- after today's meeting, we're going to stick to the original schedule and it's a few days after Election Day that we're actually scheduled to take up the budget where we would put forth our proposal in an omnibus, it's called.

So, thank you very much. Anybody else that wanted to speak before this committee? Seeing no other people rushing to the front, meeting adjourned.

(THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 10:40 A.M.)

DENOTES BEING SPELLED PHONETICALLY

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